

Adult Basic Education/English as a Second Language

Program Details

Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) are provided by community and technical colleges and, to a lesser extent, community-based organizations. Among the ABE/ESL participants included in this report, 97.2 percent received their training at community and technical colleges and 2.8 percent received training at community-based organizations. This report is limited to adults who identified employment-related reasons for enrolling in basic skills courses and who proceeded to take only basic skills courses.¹ Those who took basic skills courses for non-employment-related reasons are not included.

Every two years, the Workforce Board measures the performance of key workforce programs. In this report, you'll find out more about the program and who is served, the metrics used to measure performance and how the program performed.

ABE/ESL includes courses in the following skills.

- ABE provides remediation and employment and college readiness skills in reading, writing, and mathematics for adults whose skills are at, or below, the eighth grade level; GED Test Preparation in basic academic skills beyond ABE for those participants whose goal is to pass the high school equivalency examination; and High School Completion instruction for adults who want to earn an adult high school diploma; and Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) for those transitioning into professional technical/academic certificate and degree programs.

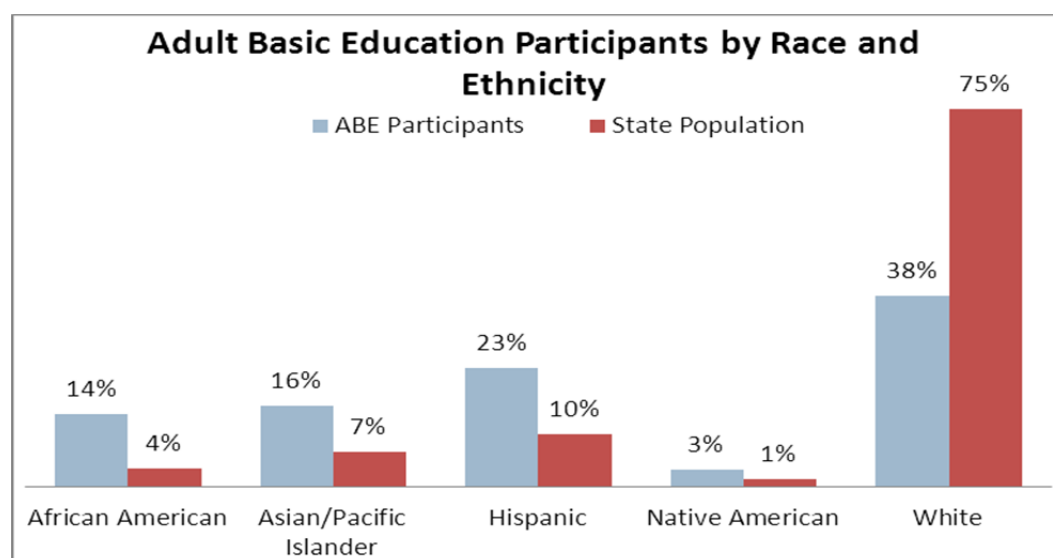
ESL provides basic skills instruction and non-transfer level instruction across a wide range of competency levels in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Participant Profile

For this report, researchers studied the results of 29,425 participants who left an ABE/ESL program during the 2008-09 school year. ABE/ESL serves the most racially and ethnically diverse group of participants of any of the workforce development programs included in this report. The percentage of African Americans is significantly higher than the percentage of African Americans statewide (14 percent versus 4 percent). This is also true of Asian/Pacific Islanders (16 percent versus 7 percent), and Hispanics (23 percent versus 10 percent). Overall, non-whites comprised 62 percent of participants, up 4 percentage points from 2007-08.

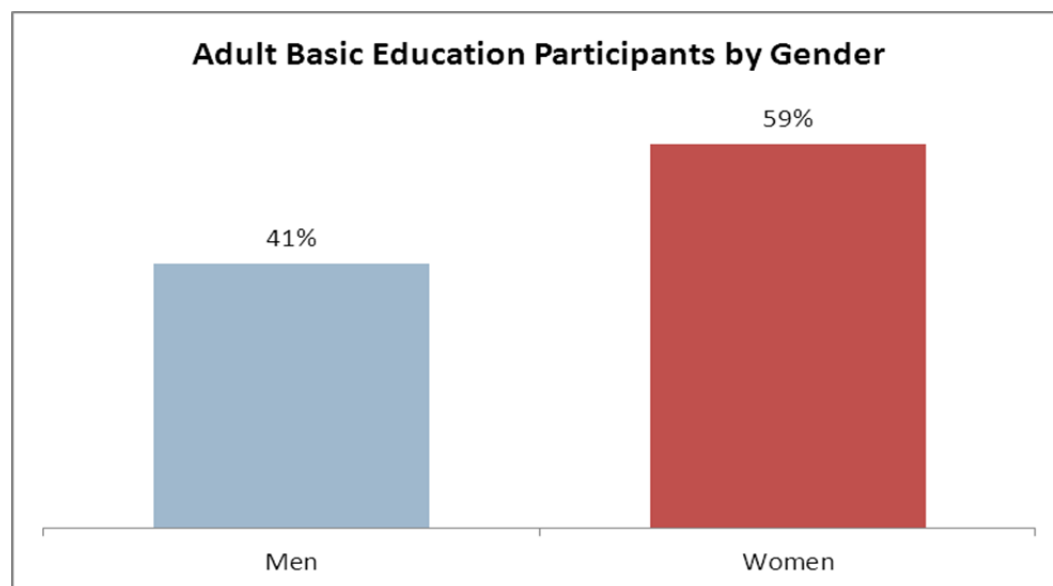
¹ Individuals taking both vocational courses and basic skills are included in the chapter on CTC Professional-Technical Education, which presents net impact estimates for participants taking a blend of basic skills and vocational training.

Non-whites comprised 62 percent of the participants. This is somewhat higher than the 59 percent from the 2007-08 report.² The percentage of ABE/ESL participants who are an ethnic/racial minority is significantly higher than the percentage of minorities statewide.



Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data 2008-09.

Almost 60 percent of participants are female, the same female percentage as in 2007-08.



Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data 2008-09.

²In this report, unless otherwise stated, racial and ethnic minority groups are mutually exclusive; that is, an individual belongs to one group only. The groups include the following: Hispanics of any race (also referred to as Hispanics); non-Hispanic African Americans (also referred to as African Americans); non-Hispanic Asians/Pacific Islanders (also referred to as Asians/Pacific Islanders); non-Hispanic Native Americans and Alaskan Natives (also referred to as Native Americans); non-Hispanic multiracial (also referred to as multiracial); and non-Hispanic whites (also referred to as whites). According to the 2009 U.S. Census Bureau estimates from the American Community Survey, 75 percent are white; 4 percent are African American; 1 percent are Native American; 7 percent are Asians/Pacific Islander; 3 percent are multiracial; and 10 percent are Hispanic.

The median age when leaving an ABE/ESL program was 29 years old. A quarter of participants were under age 22, while a quarter of the participants were over age 39.

State Core Measures: Tracking ABE/ESL Progress

The Workforce Board routinely measures the performance of our state's largest workforce programs. As a customer-focused advocate for Washington's workers and employers, the Workforce Board strives to provide performance accountability, verifying whether worker education and training programs provide a return on investment for participants and taxpayers.

The Workforce Training Results report seeks to answer five core questions:

- Did participants get the skills they needed?
- Did participants get a job and how much were they paid?
- Were employers satisfied with the preparation workers received?
- Has the program made a difference in the participant's success?
- Did participants and the public receive a return on their investment?

Data Comes From State Wage Files & Employer Survey

The 2011 Workforce Training Results includes information obtained from Employment Security Department wage files in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and federal employment records. Employer satisfaction was assessed through the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey responses from 291 firms that hired new employees who recently received ABE/ESL instruction.

Net Impact Study Adds More Insight into Program Performance

In addition, this year's report includes a comprehensive Net Impact Study. To assess both short- and long-term employment and earnings trends, data on employment records from as far back as 2006-07 is used in the Net Impact Study.

Conducted every four years, this study provides a head-to-head comparison of participants and non-participants to help answer a central question: How much of a workforce participant's success in obtaining a job, or a higher wage, is due to the workforce program? By comparing program participants with similar individuals who did not participate in a workforce training program, the Net Impact Study indicates whether employment and earnings gains are due to the workforce program, or if workers could have made this progress on their own. This research also allows for a more detailed analysis as to whether the participant and the public received a return on their investment in the program.

Turn to page 18 for the Net Impact Study. Conducted every four years, this in-depth report adds extra value to 2011 Workforce Training Results. The study provides a side-by-side comparison of participants vs. similar non-participants, answering the question of whether the program is making a difference.

Did Participants Have a Job and How Much Were They Paid?

To find out whether participants had jobs and how much they earned, participant records were matched with Employment Security Department wage files from Washington and neighboring states.³

According to record matches, 46 percent of ABE/ESL participants had employment during the third quarter after they left the program, six percentage points lower than reported in 2007-08. Their median hourly wage of \$10.67, and median annual earnings of \$16,197, was slightly lower than in the prior program year.⁴ Over the past decade, employment rates and earnings have stagnated or steadily declined.

Employment and Earnings for Adult Basic Education/ English as a Second Language Participants, 2009-10

Performance Measure	Results
Employment Rate (Self-Reported)	61%
Employment Rate* (State Records)	46%
Full Time Employment **	49%
Median Hourly Wage***	\$10.67
Median Quarterly Hours	385 hours
Median Annualized Earnings***	\$16,197

* These figures apply to those with employment reported to state employment agencies six to nine months after leaving the program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent.

** Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week.

*** Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to account for inflation.

To put earnings in context, the median number of dependents ABE/ESL participants were able to support at poverty level in 2009-10 was 2.4 people. At the 200 percent poverty level, it was less than one person (.7 people).⁵

³ These files contain quarterly earnings and hours worked information on those individuals with employment reported for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits purposes (approximately 90 percent of in-state employment, with self-employment, active duty military, and those working for religious nonprofit organizations being the major groups of employers not included).

⁴ Annual earnings are calculated as third quarter earnings multiplied by four. Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter. All wages and earnings are stated in first quarter 2009 dollars.

⁵ In 2009, the poverty level for one person was \$10,830 per year. The 200-percent-poverty level that year was \$21,660 for one person.

Self Sufficiency Level Trends for ABE/ESL

Performance Measure	2002-03	2004-05	2006-07	2008-09	2009-10
Household size-poverty level	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.4
Household size-poverty level at 200 percent	.8	.8	.8	.8	.7

ABE/ESL Participants Receiving Benefits from Employers

Performance Measure	2002-03	2004-05	2006-07	2008-09*	2009-10
Self-Reported Medical Benefits from Employer	53%	44%	44%	N/A	38%
Self-Reported Retirement Benefits from Employer	32%	23%	28%	N/A	28%

*Due to budget concerns, the Participant Survey was not conducted in 2008-09.

The next table shows employment and earnings over the course of five study periods. This data is also visually represented on the following page for the years 2002 to 2010.

Employment and Earnings Trends for ABE/ESL Participants

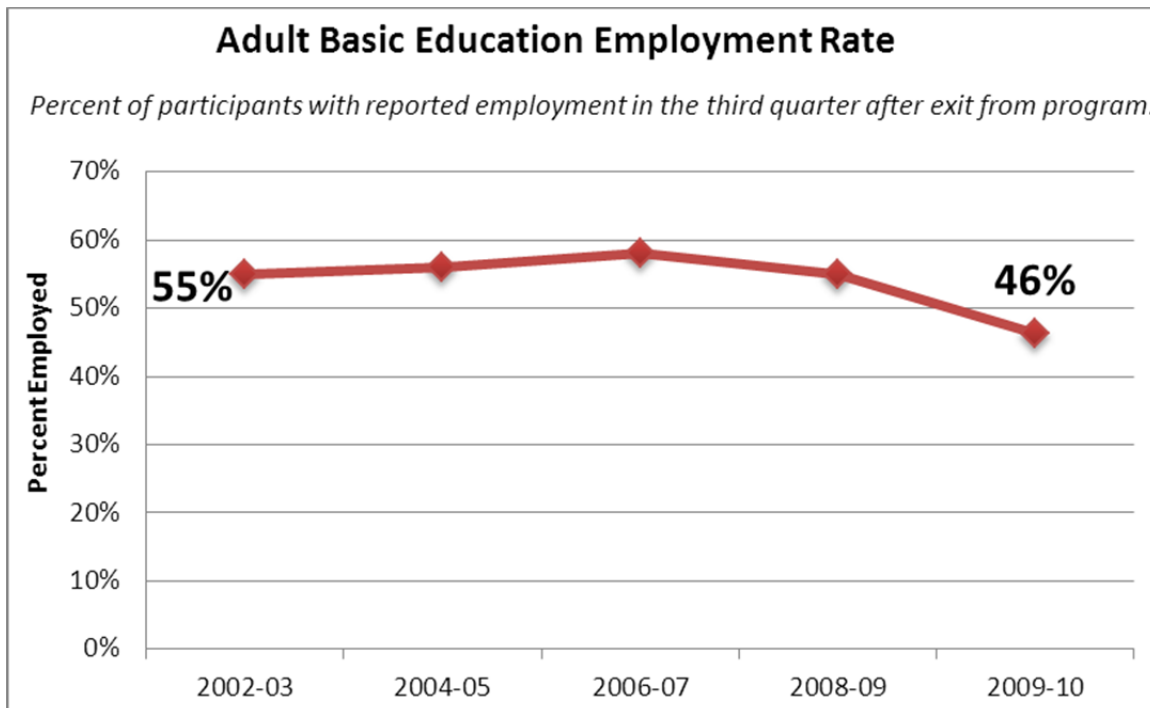
Performance Measure	2002-03	2004-05	2006-07	2008-09	2009-10
Employment Rate (Self-Reported)	64%	64%	69%	N/A	61%
Employment Rate* (State Records)	55%	56%	58%	55%	46%
Full Time Employment**	54%	54%	54%	53%	49%
Median Quarterly Hours	419	412	420	402	385
Median Hourly Wage***	\$10.60	\$10.69	\$10.75	\$11.07	\$10.67
Median Annualized Earnings***	\$17,404	\$16,843	\$17,607	\$17,186	\$16,197

*These figures apply to those with employment reported to ESD six to nine months after leaving program for all CTC Professional-Technical participants, and are not limited to those who completed a program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent.

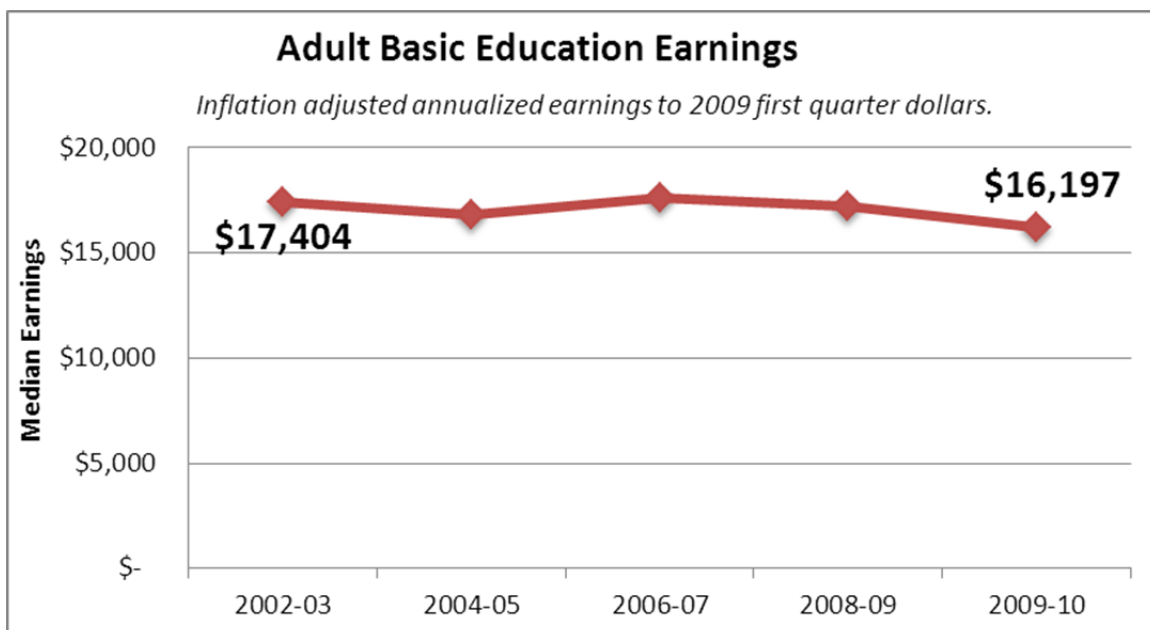
**Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week.

***Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to account for inflation.

Since 2002, ABE/ESL participants who did not enroll in vocational training have experienced falling earnings and employment levels.



Source: Workforce Training Results 2002-10.



Source: Workforce Training Results 2002-10.

Adult Basic Education Employment by Industry

Employment among ABE/ESL participants is heavily concentrated in services, retail trade, and manufacturing industries. The percentage of 2009-10 participants employed in services is 4 percentage points higher than the prior year. Employment in the retail trades is the same as the prior year, whereas manufacturing is one percentage point lower. The biggest increase is in health care services, which increased from 4.9 percent in 2008-09 to nearly 12 percent.

Industry Group	
59.2%	Services (See breakout below)
14.2%	Retail Trade (See breakout below)
10.4%	Manufacturing
3.9%	Natural Resources and Mining
3.5%	Construction
2.6%	Wholesale Trade
2.3%	Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities
2.1%	Financial Services
1.3%	Public Administration
0.5%	Information
Breakout of Services Industry	
18.2%	Accommodation and Food Services
11.6%	Health Care
9.6%	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
7.4%	All Other Services
6.8%	Social Assistance
2.5%	Education Services
2.1%	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
1.1%	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
Breakout of Retail Trade Industry	
4.1%	Department Stores and Warehouse Clubs
3.7%	Groceries, Supermarkets & Specialty Foods
1.9%	All Other Retail
1.4%	Clothing and Accessories Stores
1.3%	Gas Stations/Convenience Stores
0.9%	Motor Vehicle and Accessories Sales
0.8%	Home furnishings,Garden,Hardware
<i>Note: Industry groups are based on North American Industry Classification System codes.</i>	

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data in third quarter after exiting program.

Wages and Employment Results Vary by Population

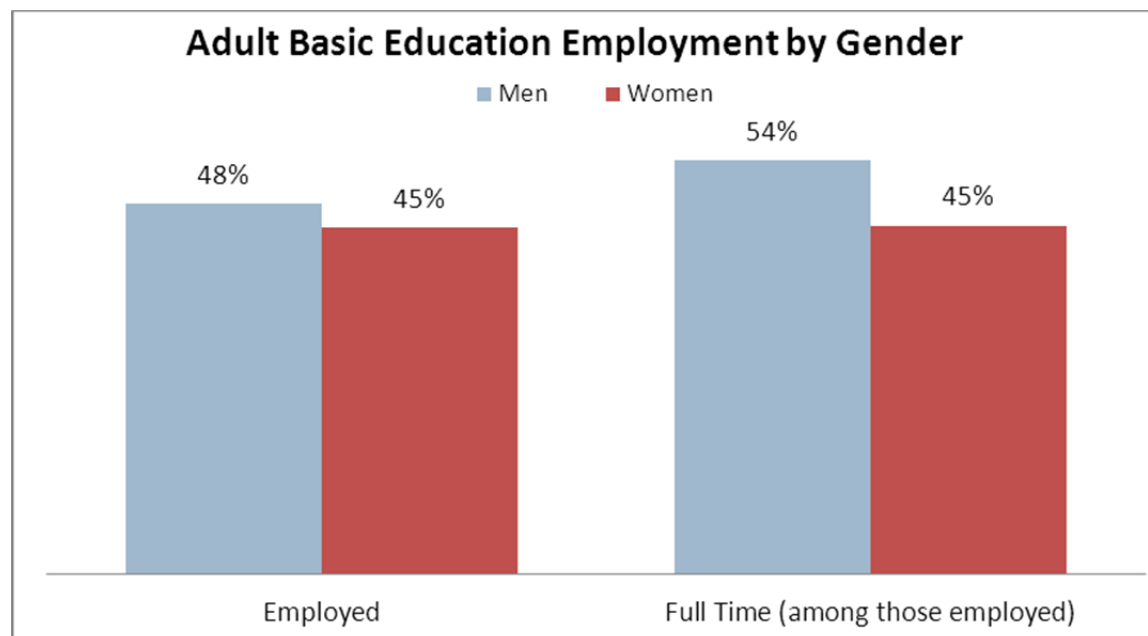
Wage and employment results can vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and disability. Among participants employed during the third quarter after exit, there is a substantial gender gap in labor market outcomes. Employment rates, hours worked, earnings, and wages are lower for women, although the ratios have slightly improved from 2008-09.

Gender Differences in Labor Market Outcomes Among ABE/ESL Participants in the Third Quarter After Leaving Program			
2009-10	Women	Men	Ratio
Employment Reported to ESD	45%	48%	94%
Median Quarterly Hours Worked	360	412	87%
Median Hourly Wage*	\$10.36	\$11.31	92%
Median Annual Earnings*	\$14,722	\$18,487	80%

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data 2008-09.

*Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to account for inflation.

The following chart shows the percentage of men and women ABE/ESL participants who reported being employed. Also broken out is the percentage of those working that held full-time jobs. Male ABE participants were more likely to be employed (48 percent compared to 45 percent) and also more likely to be working full-time (54 percent compared to 45 percent).



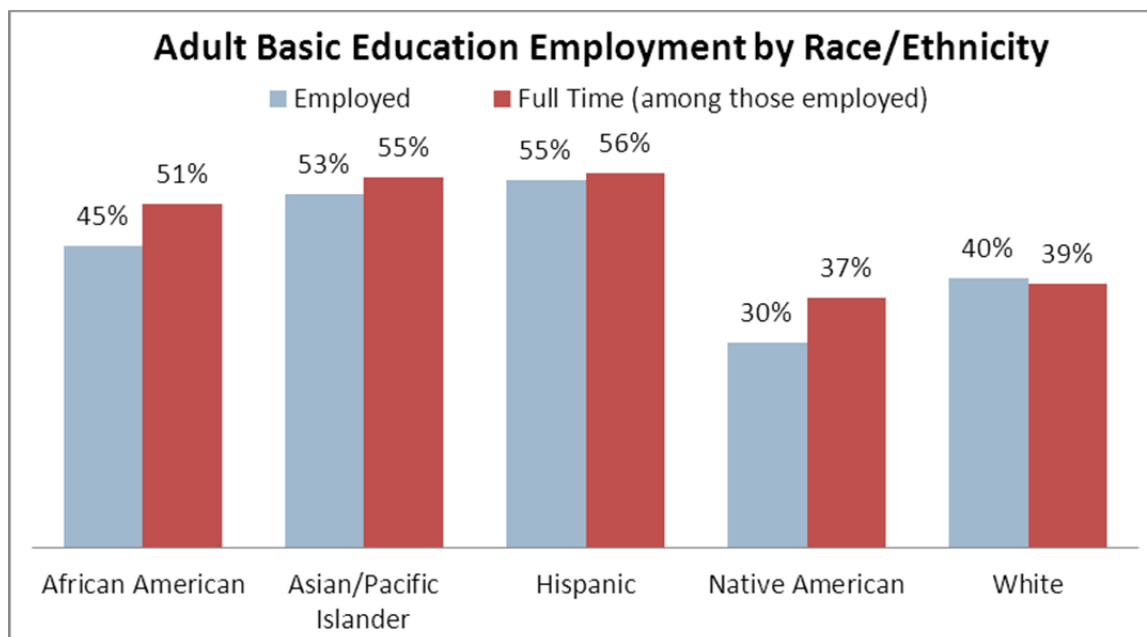
Source: Matches with Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data 2008-09.

Race/Ethnicity Plays Role

ABE/ESL program graduates had different employment rates when comparing race and ethnicity. The highest employment rate was found among Hispanics (55 percent), followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (53 percent), African Americans (45 percent), whites (40 percent) and Native Americans (30 percent). Of those ABE/ESL participants who were working, the same pattern was found with higher percentages of Hispanics (56 percent), Asian/Pacific Islanders (55 percent) and African Americans (51 percent) working full time compared to whites (43 percent) and Native Americans (37 percent).

Median hourly wages appear to follow employment patterns by race, with the highest wages among Hispanics (\$11.30), Asian/Pacific Islanders (\$10.75), African Americans (\$10.74), and slightly lower wages among whites (\$10.26) and Native Americans (\$9.95).

The same pattern is reflected in median annual earnings. Hispanics have the highest earnings, at \$19,000, followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders (\$17,950), African Americans (\$16,632), whites (\$12,787) and Native Americans (\$11,067).



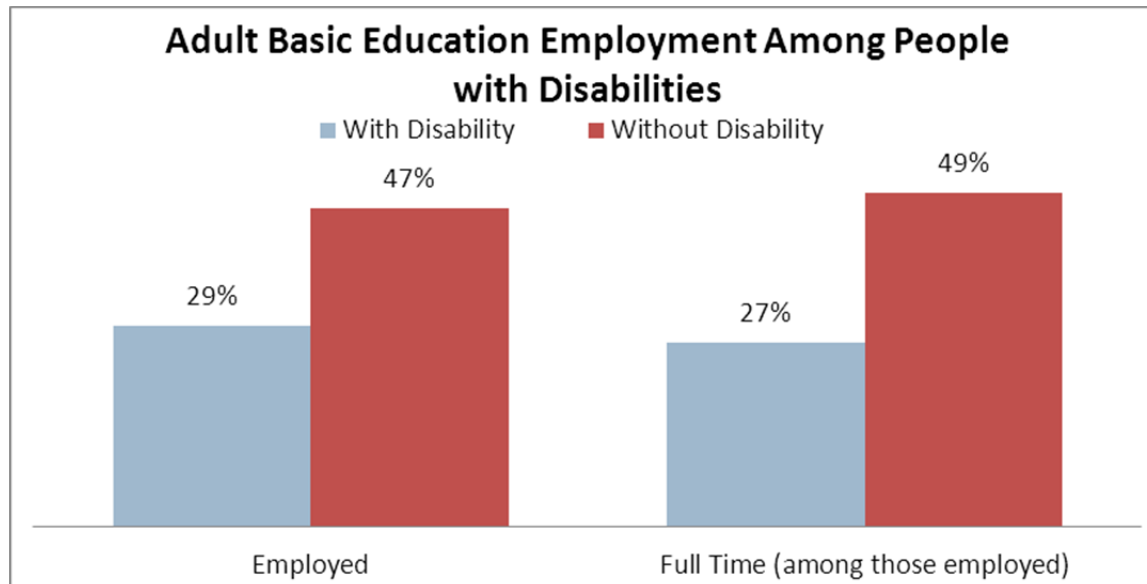
Source: Matches with Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data 2008-09.

Disability Impacts Employment, Earnings

Among ABE/ESL participants observed in 2009-10, just 2 percent had a disability (less than the general population percentage of 12 percent having a disability).⁶ Participants with disabilities did less well in the labor market than other participants. They were less likely to have employment reported to the state's Employment Security Department (29 percent versus 47 percent for participants without a disability). This is a decrease in the employment

⁶ 2009 U.S. Census Bureau estimates from the American Community Survey.

rate among those with disabilities, down from 45 percent in 2008-09. Participants with disabilities were also less likely to work full time than participants without a disability (27 percent versus 49 percent), their median hourly wage (\$9.98 versus \$10.70) was 93 percent of the amount earned by participants without a disability, and median annual earnings were nearly half for those with a disability compared to those without a disability (\$8,047 versus \$16,288).

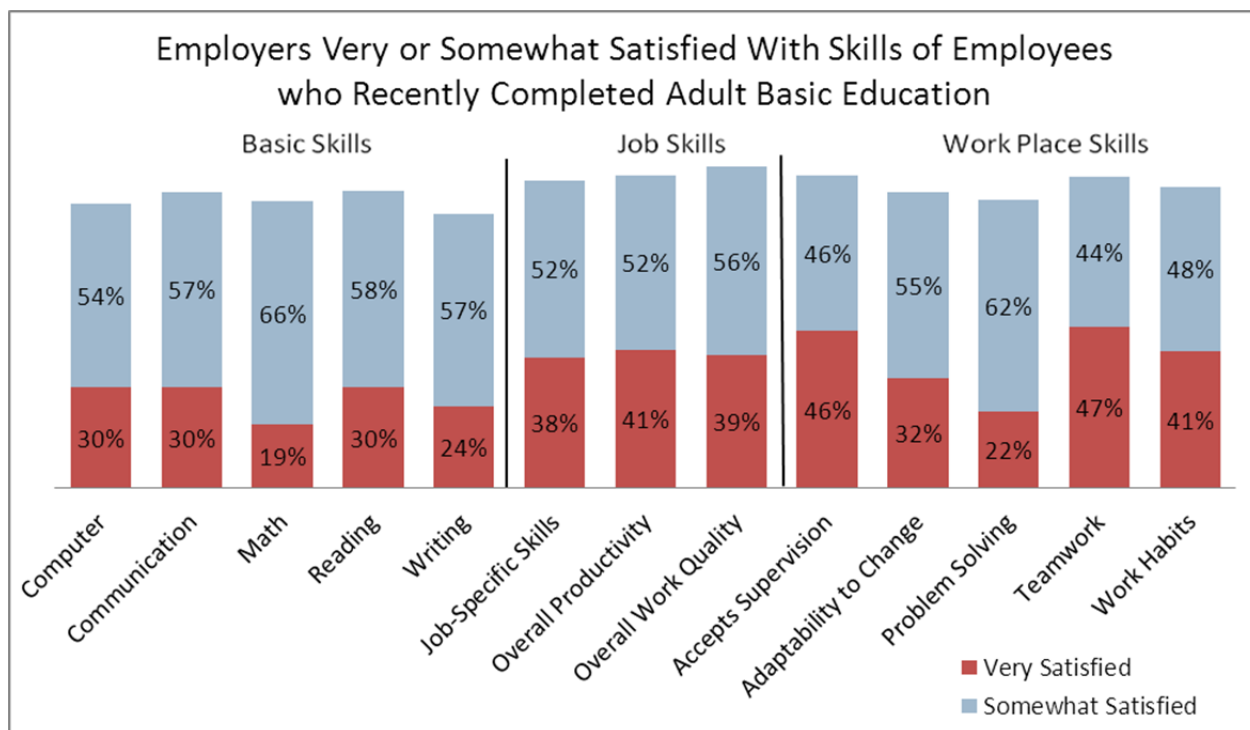


Source: Community and Technical Colleges Administrative Data and Employment Security Department data matches 2008-09.

Were Employers Satisfied with the Preparation Workers Received?

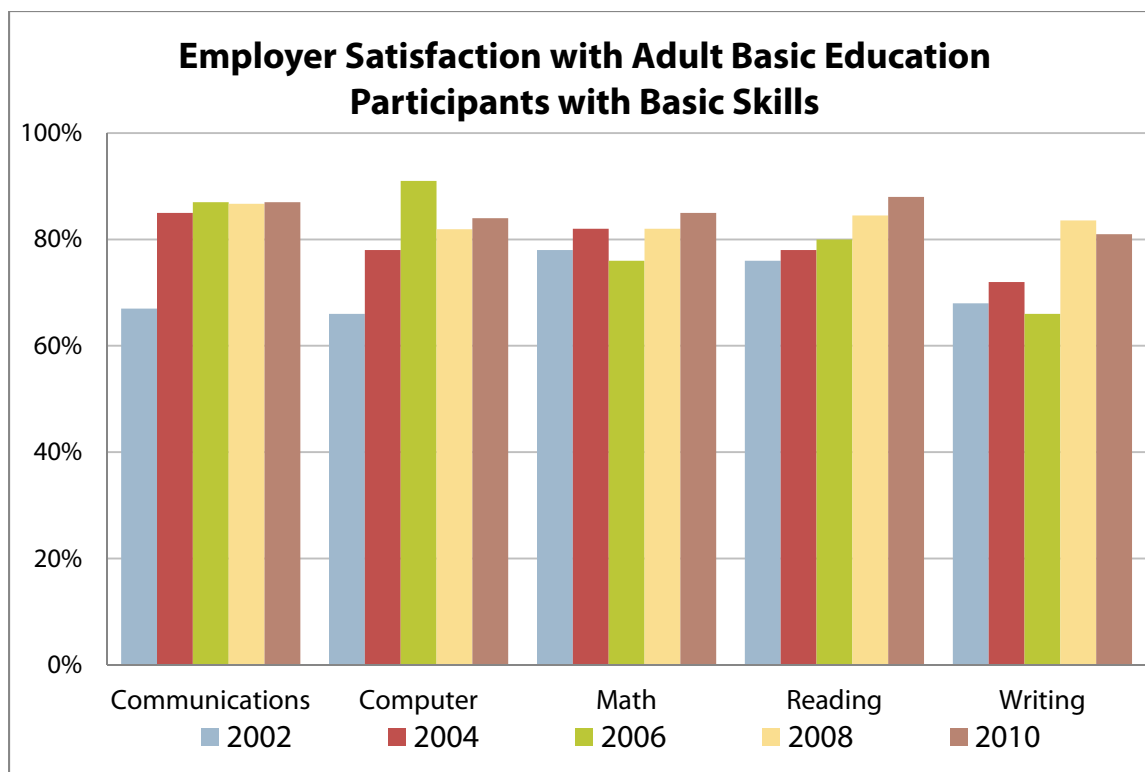
The Workforce Board's Employer Survey, administered during 2010, asked firms to evaluate new employees who had recently completed an ABE/ESL program. Employer satisfaction was broken down into three categories: Basic Skills, Job Skills and Work Place Skills. Basic skills refer to reading, writing, math, communication and computer skills. Job skills refer to skills specific to the job as well as overall work quality and productivity. Work place skills refer to the skills necessary to get along in the workplace such as ability to accept supervision, teamwork, ability to adapt to changing situations, problem solving and overall work habits.

Of the 296 employers surveyed, 95 percent stated they were satisfied with the overall work quality of these new employees of which 39 percent said they were "very satisfied." Employers' levels of satisfaction with various skills of new employees differed somewhat from the previous survey. Much higher percentages were "very satisfied" in all areas, especially with willingness to accept supervision, teamwork, and productivity. The lowest percentages of "very satisfied" responses concerned problem solving, math, writing and computer skills.

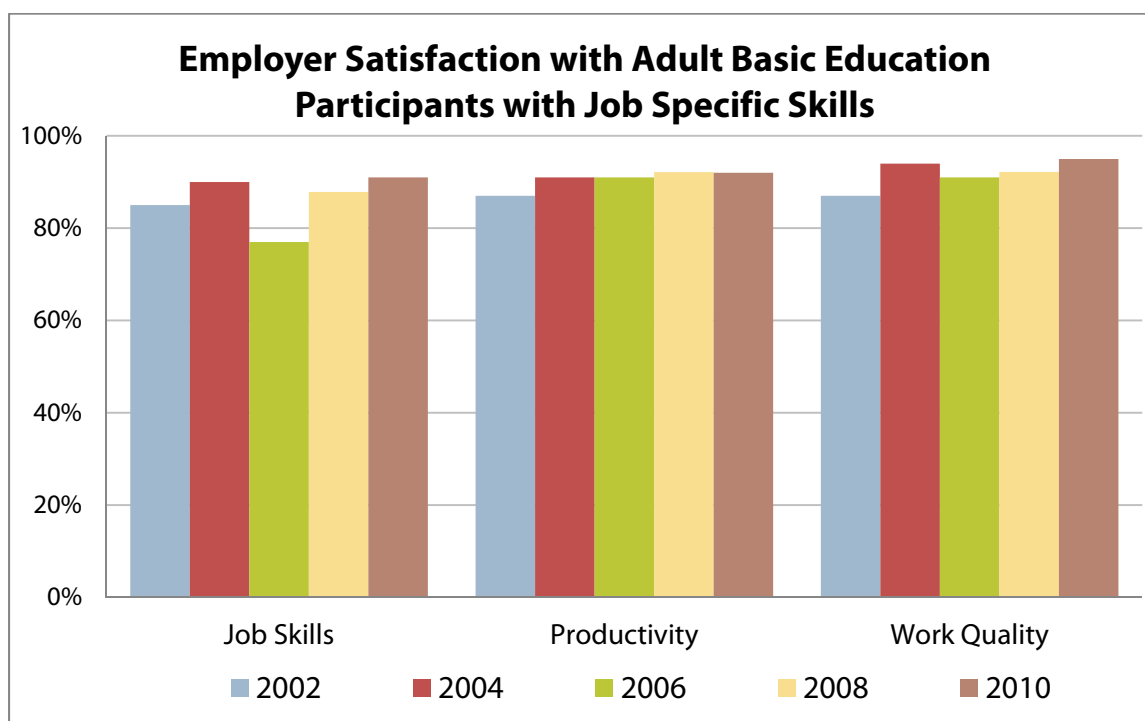


Source: Workforce Board Employer Survey conducted in 2010.

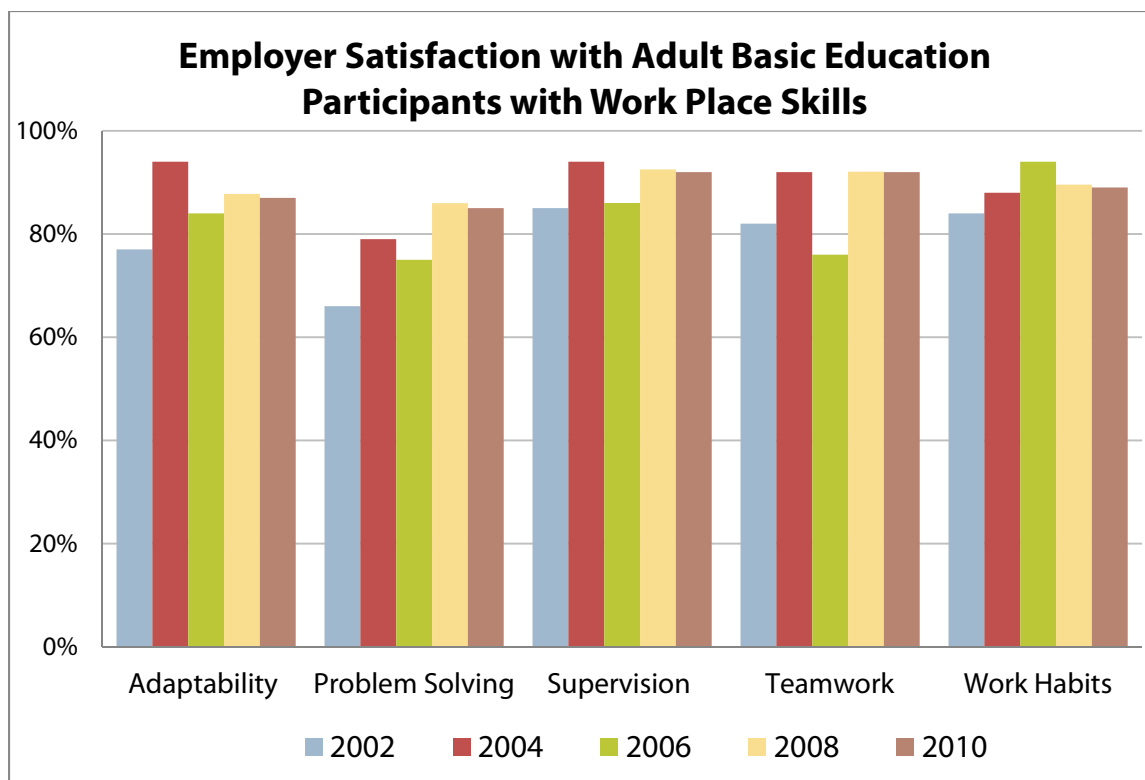
Over the previous decade, overall employer satisfaction with skills has varied depending on the type of skill. The following figures depict the satisfaction of employers with work-related skills and basic skills of new employees who recently completed an ABE/ESL program. There has been an improvement from 2008 to 2010 in terms of employer satisfaction with math, reading, generalized job skills and work quality. Other measures of employer satisfaction in 2010 are equal to or less than employer satisfaction as reported in 2008.



Source: Workforce Board's biennial Employer Surveys from 2002 through 2010.



Source: Workforce Board's biennial Employer Surveys from 2002 through 2010.



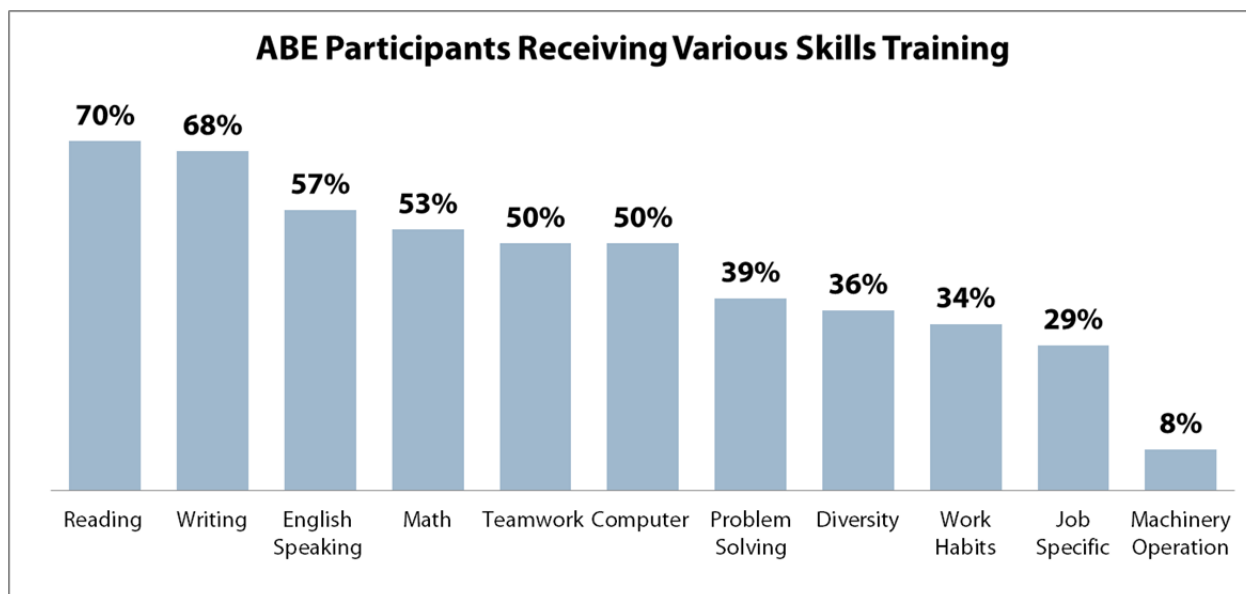
Source: Workforce Board's biennial Employer Surveys from 2002 through 2010.

Participant Survey

In 2011, the Workforce Board surveyed ABE/ESL participants who had left their program in 2009-10. The survey provided data on employment and participant satisfaction with the training. The survey was conducted by telephone and was completed by 253 participants.

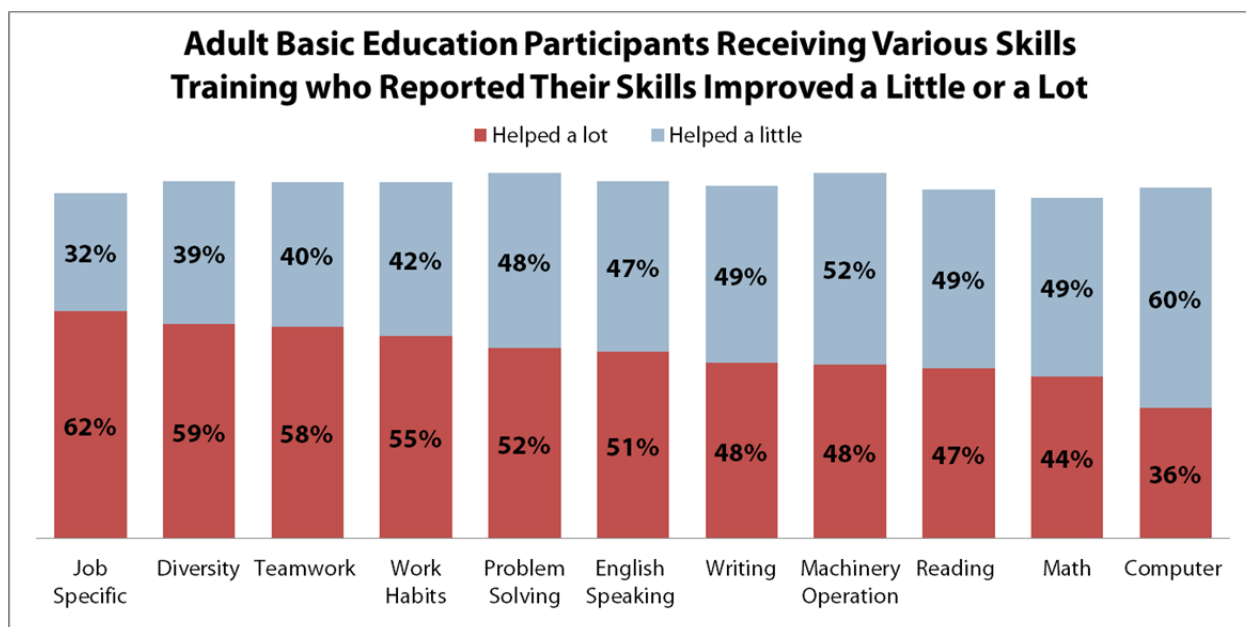
According to survey results, 73 percent of participants indicated they entered an ABE/ESL program to learn skills for a new job. Participants also said they enrolled for their own personal enjoyment or improvement (91 percent), or to improve their English speaking or reading skills (70 and 72 percent respectively).

As in previous studies, the majority of participants received training in basic skills such as teamwork, diversity and work habits. Participants also received training in other basic and workplace skills. Fewer received training in workplace skills such as problem solving, diversity, and work habits. The highest percentage of participants, 76 percent, said they gained reading skills, followed closely by 75 percent who reported writing skills.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

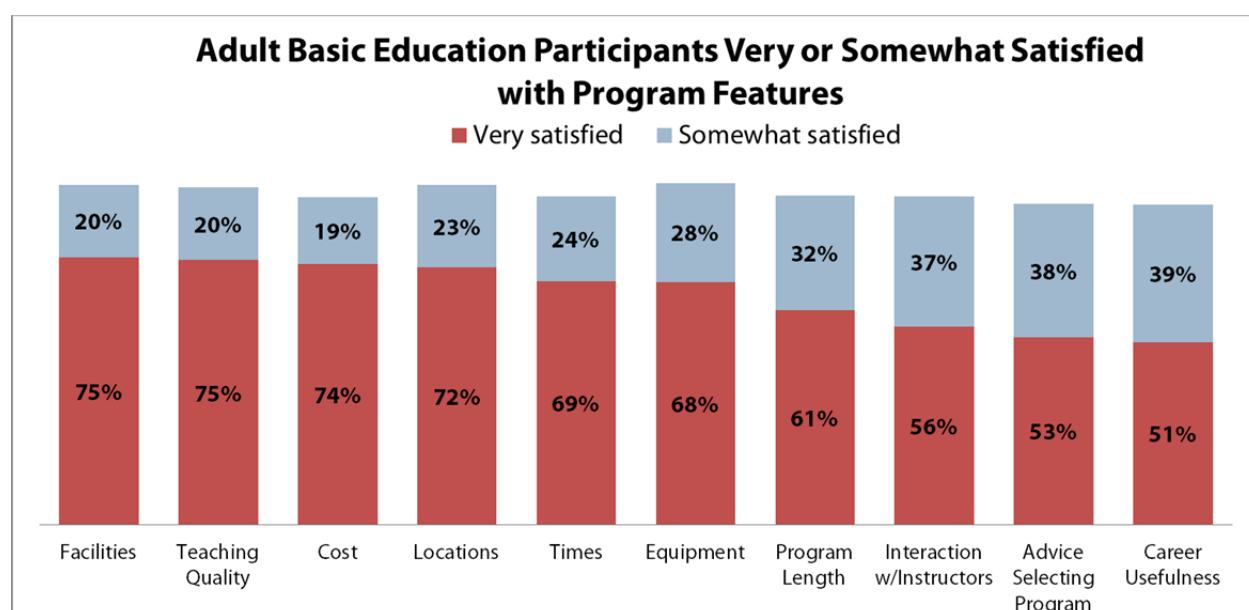
Participants tended to report higher levels of improvement with workplace skills, such as teamwork, diversity and work habits than with basic skills such as computer, writing or math. As in the previous study, most participants reported their skills in these areas improved as a result of the training. The percentage of participants who reported a lot of improvement in work habits increased 7 percentage points (from 48 percent to 55 percent). In all other areas the percent who reported their skills improving a lot remained the same or changed only marginally compared to the prior study.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

Participant Satisfaction

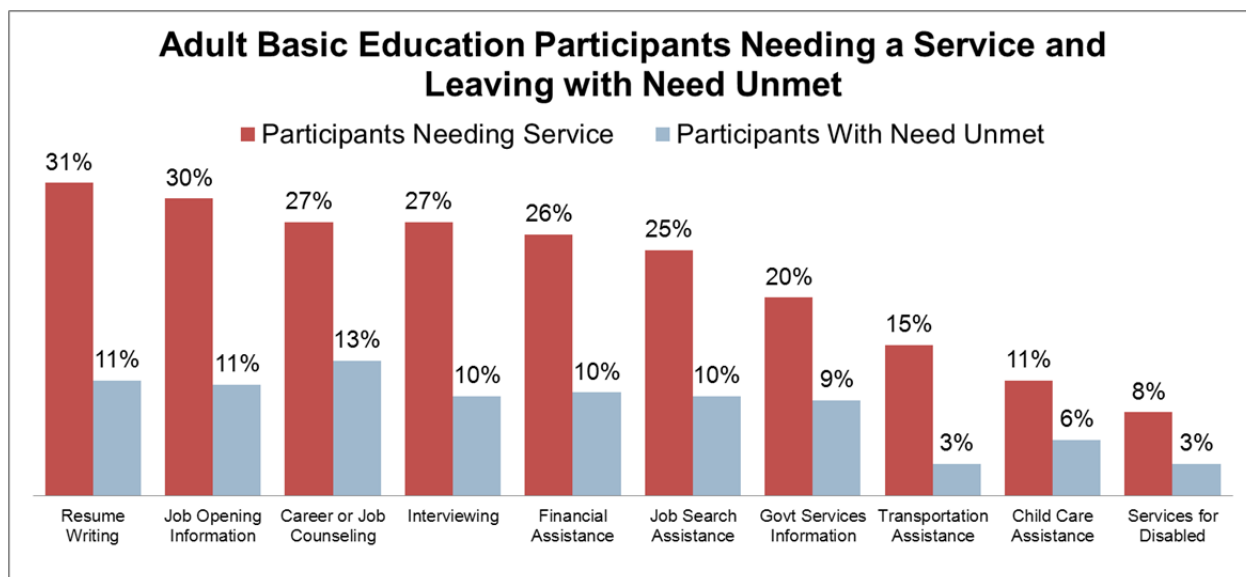
In general, participants were satisfied with the training they received. Some 93 percent of participants reported being satisfied with their program overall, down slightly from the previous 96 percent. In addition, the percentage who stated that they had met their educational objectives decreased from 78 percent in the previous study to 68 percent this year. A majority of participants indicated satisfaction with various program features. Three-quarters of participants reported they were "very satisfied" with program facilities and teaching quality. Compared to the 2008 survey, the feature with the largest increase of participants reporting they were "very satisfied" was equipment (which increased from 63 to 68 percent). The only feature to have a decrease in the percentage of students reporting they were "very satisfied" is career usefulness, which dropped from 56 percent to 51 percent since the last survey.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

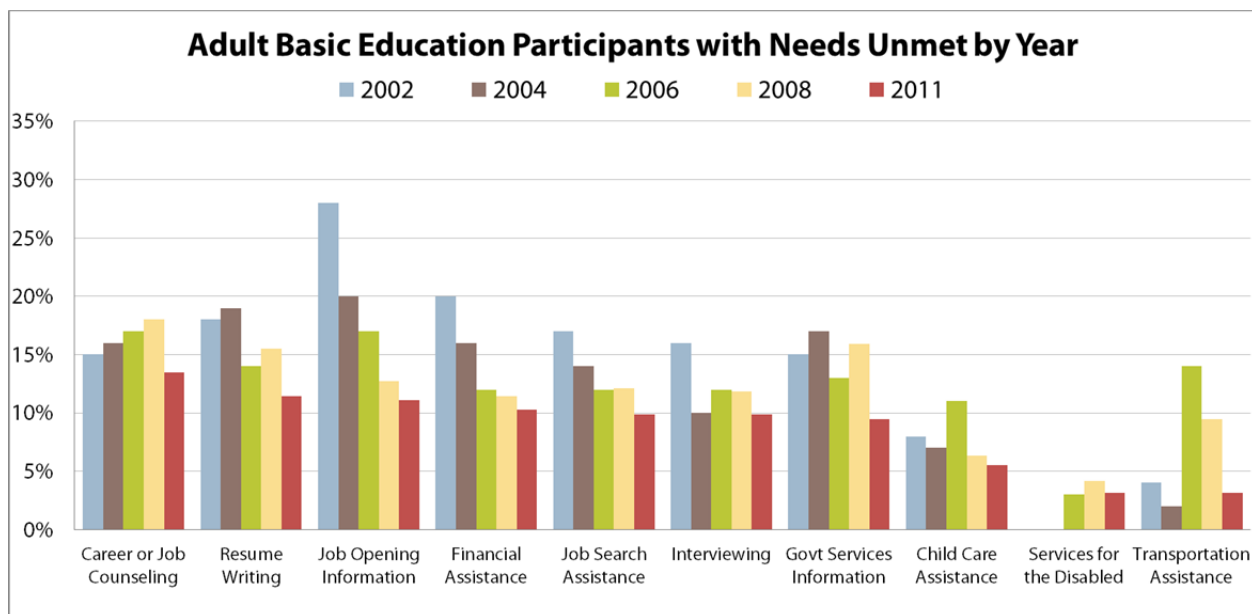
Participants reported financial assistance information as the support service most needed while enrolled. Participants also indicated high levels of need for information about resume writing, and interviewing. Participants were more likely than not to receive the services they needed. However, a relatively high 13 percent said they left the program with their need for job counseling unmet. An unmet need for resume writing, other government services, interviewing, and job opening information were reported by one in every ten students.⁷

⁷ Unmet need refers to cases where the student reports that either they did not receive the required service or what was provided did not meet their needs.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

The percentage of participants who reported leaving the program with an unmet need has declined in nearly every category, not only since the last participant survey, but since 2002. The largest decrease in unmet need came in transportation assistance, which dropped from 9 percent to 3 percent since the last survey.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Surveys 2002-11.

Relationship of Training to Employment

To measure the extent to which a participant's education program and training related to employment, we asked participants three questions:

1. How related was the program to their job?
2. How important was the training in getting hired?
3. Are the skills they learned useful in their job?

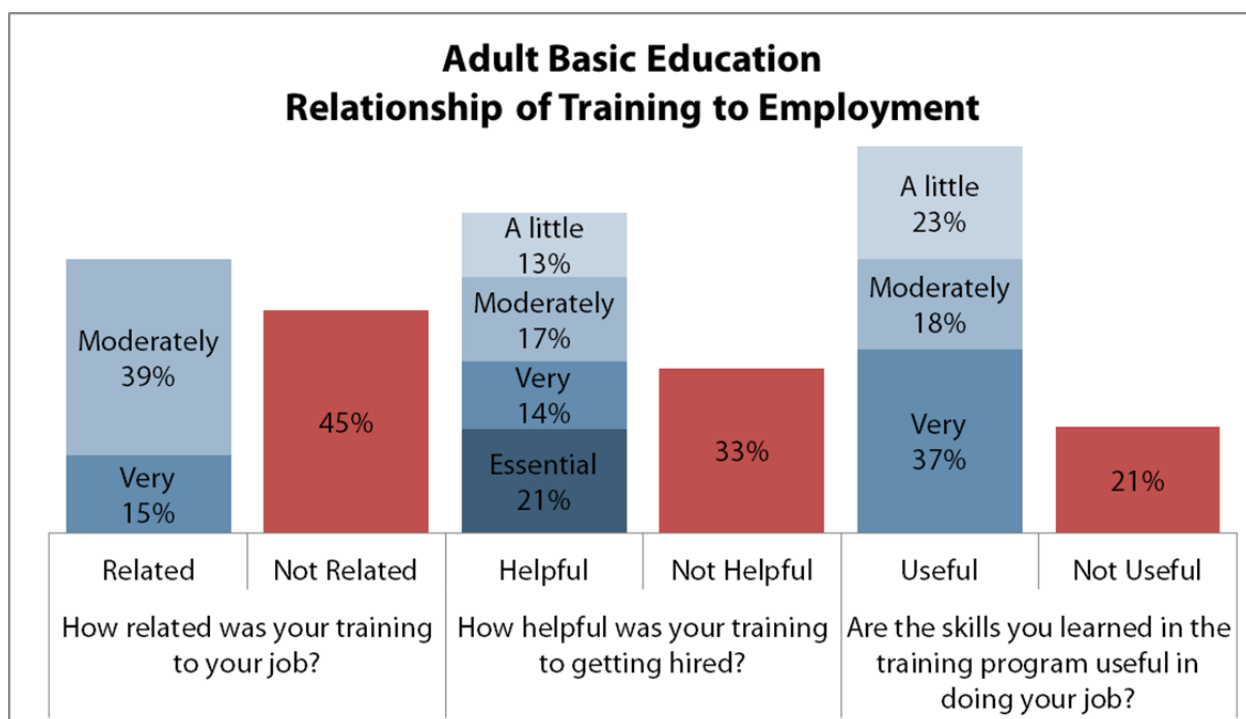
Asking about the relationship between training and employment in different ways can produce more complete information. For example, some participants said their training was not related to their job, but nevertheless found the skills acquired were useful on the job.

Among ABE participants employed seven to nine months after leaving a program, 15 percent said their training was "very related" to their job. A further 39 percent reported the training was "moderately related" to their job. Compared to 2008, participants in 2011 reported slightly lower rates of training related to employment, by 3 percentage points in each category.

Participants interviewed in 2011 also indicated the training was helpful to them in getting their job. Of those participants, 21 percent indicated their training was an "essential requirement," another 14 percent indicated it was "very important," and 17 percent reported it was "moderately important." Thirteen percent said it was "a little helpful." Only 33 percent indicated their training was "not important at all" to getting their job.

Three out of four participants said the skills they learned in their training program were useful in doing their job. Some 37 percent of participants indicated the skills were "very useful," 18 percent said "moderately useful," and 23 percent "a little useful." The remaining 21 percent of ABE participants who were employed indicated the skills were "not useful at all."

When combining two of the questions about the program's relationship to the job and about whether the skills acquired were helpful, a small percentage of participants answered negatively to both. Just 19 percent of participants employed the third quarter after exit said the training they received was *neither* helpful in their job nor related to the job they obtained.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

Net Impact - Did Program Make a Difference in Participant Success

Every four years the Workforce Board conducts net impact and cost-benefit analyses of workforce development programs. This detailed study compares participants and non-participants. The net impact part of this study attempts to measure whether the program made a difference in the participant's success. Washington is the only state to periodically conduct rigorous net impact evaluations of its workforce programs.

The Adult Basic Education program has positive net impacts on annualized earnings.

The net impact analysis was conducted by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research (Upjohn), a national leader in evaluating training programs. To do the analysis, Upjohn studied program participants to see what results they achieved and compared these results with a control group. Individuals who participated in a WIA Adult program were compared to individuals who had similar demographic characteristics, but who did not participate in any of the programs included in the study. The comparison group members were selected from among those who registered with WorkSource, Washington's one-stop career center system.

The most recent net impact analyses examined the short-term (Program Year 2007-08) and long-term (Program Year 2005-06) experiences of participants who left the ABE/ESL Training program.

Impact on Employment and Earnings: Participants vs. Control Group

ABE/ESL Participants	Short-term [^]	Long-term [^]
Net Employment Impact*	No significant positive impact	No significant positive impact
Net Hourly Wage Impact**	No significant positive impact	No significant positive impact
Net Quarterly Hours Impact	15.4	15.1
Annualized Earnings**	\$922	\$830

[^]Short-term is three quarters after program exit. Long-term is average across three years since program exit.

*Percentages listed are employment percentage points above those of the control group of non-participants.

**Wages and earnings, expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars; represent the average difference between ABE/ESL participants who got jobs and those in the control group who were employed.

To estimate these impacts, individuals who received employment-related ABE/ESL education were compared to individuals who had similar characteristics within the state's employment service, but who did not participate in any of the programs included in the study.⁸ Additional estimates were made for a cohort of ABE/ESL participants who also participated in CTC Professional Technical Education.

As can be seen above, Adult Basic Education participants worked more hours per quarter than non-participants in the control group. They also garnered higher annualized earnings than those who did not participate. However, the program did not have a significant positive impact on employment and hourly wages.

Costs and Benefits

The cost-benefit analysis estimates the value of the net impact on earnings, employee benefits (estimated at 25 percent of earnings), UI benefits, and certain taxes.

Program costs include both direct program costs and support payments borne by the government and the earnings students gave up while participating in the program. Benefits and costs are calculated for both the observed period of time and based upon a statistical model that estimated the benefits and costs out to the age of 65. In order to compare benefits and costs in terms of net present values, post-program benefits and costs are discounted by 3 percent per year and all figures are stated in 2009 Q1 dollars to control for inflation. The benefits and costs presented here are based on impacts estimated for students leaving programs in 2005-2006, because a longer-term follow up is required for this analysis. The results are for those students who took only basic skills courses in the colleges.

For each student in ABE/ESL only, the public (taxpayer) cost is about \$2,636 over the length of their enrollment, and the student cost is \$109 in foregone earnings while in school. The average ABE/ESL student makes no net gains in earnings in either the first two and one-half

⁸ The net impact study excludes individuals who enrolled in ABE/ESL programs for personal enhancement or non-employment-related purposes.

years after leaving college or during the course of working life to age 65 compared to similar individuals who did not participate in any of the workforce development programs.

Participant and Public Benefits and Costs per Participant in Community and Technical Colleges ABE Programs

Benefit/Cost	First 2.5 years		Lifetime (until 65)	
	Participant	Public	Participant	Public
Benefits *				
Earnings	-	-	-	-
Fringe Benefits	-	-	-	-
Taxes	-	-	-	-
Transfers				
UI	-\$682	\$682	-\$1,022	\$1,022
Costs				
Foregone net earnings	\$109	\$12	\$109	\$12
Program costs	\$0	-\$2,636	\$0	-\$2,636
Benefits	-	-	-	-
Costs	\$109	-\$2,624	\$109	-\$2,624
Total (Net)	-	-	-	-

Note: Benefits and costs are expressed in 2009 first quarter dollars. Upjohn estimated the impact of the net change in earnings of Social Security, Medicare, federal income, and state sales taxes.

Again, the above findings are for students who participated in ABE/ESL only and does not include students who also participated in professional-technical education or other training. In contrast, Integrated Basic Skills Education and Training (I-BEST) has significant positive impacts on participant employment and earnings.

Impact on Employment and Earnings: I-BEST Participants vs. Control Group

I-BEST Participants	Short-term^
Net Employment Impact*	3.9 percentage points
Net Hourly Wage Impact**	\$1.30
Net Quarterly Hours Impact	35.3
Annualized Earnings**	\$2,452

^Short-term is three quarters after program exit. Long-term results are not yet available for I-BEST

*Percentages listed are employment percentage points above those of the control group of non-participants.

**Wages and earnings, expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars; represent the average difference between I-BEST participants who got jobs and those in the control group who were employed.